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RESEARCH STUDY

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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NATO: SUPPORT FOR COMMITTEE ON CHALLENGES
OF MODERN SOCIETY (CCMS) GROWING

The second meeting of the CCMS opened in Brussels on April 13. This paper examines the evolution of the attitudes of NATO members toward the CCMS and describes the present state of their cooperation with it.

ABSTRACT

The original skepticism of most Western European NATO governments (in contrast to those of Greece and Turkey) over the advisability of NATO's entering the field of environmental problems has been largely dissipated since the CCMS was formed and CCMS projects have got under way. The cool reception first given the US initiative, made by the President at the April 1969 20th anniversary NATO ministerial session in Washington, did not reflect any lack of feeling among West Europeans that a major international effort is needed to cope with urban and pollution problems. In fact, concern over these problems has grown until it is becoming an important domestic political issue in several countries. The coolness arose primarily from a general belief that NATO is not the appropriate forum for an international effort in the environment field and from fear that formation of the CCMS might actually harm international environmental

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activities by causing the USSR and the Warsaw Pact nations to tag the CCMS as just another NATO vehicle and therefore to refuse to cooperate with the NATO countries in environmental programs.

Almost equally as great a reason for Western European reluctance to support the CCMS was the fact that several international organizations, primarily the Organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), were already active in the field of environmental problems. There was concern that undesirable rivalry for leadership of this field would arise. The sharp criticism of the CCMS by Austria and the other European neutrals (Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland) in the OECD Committee for Research Cooperation (CRC) in December 1969 has heightened this concern. There is also a general dislike of proliferation of international agencies dealing with environmental problems because of the fact that the Western European governments, particularly in the smaller countries, have few experts in this field and cannot support many international activities.

Nevertheless, the top leaders of most of the NATO governments supported the formation of the CCMS partly because of desire to take quick action against pollution, particularly of the ocean and air. Their support was also due partly to their belief that NATO might benefit from growing public support for action to overcome environmental problems. Another important spur was the emphasis

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placed on the CCMS by the US. Pro-CCMS NATO leaders have made efforts to convince experts within the governments in the environment field that the CCMS can play an important role in crystalizing international attention on the need for action on environmental problems and that it need not conflict with other agencies at work in the field.

The efforts of NATO leaders before the inaugural meeting of the CCMS on 8 December 1969 and the establishment of the system whereby any interested country can pilot or co-pilot a study on environmental problems have laid many fears to rest and aroused increasing interest in the CCMS. West Germany has been perhaps the most receptive, and Canada has become more involved. Belgium and Italy, despite their original caution, have also participated in CCMS special projects; the UK has promised to head a project but has been slow to organize it. The change in the French position is the most striking. After making clear that the CCMS would in no way bind French hands from bilateral cooperation with any country, including the Warsaw Pact powers, France has taken part in CCMS planning and agreed to pilot a study on "environment and strategy in regional planning." Only Norway has gone so far as to refrain from sending any observers to the meetings on the CCMS special projects. Denmark and the Netherlands have been largely passive; Iceland and Luxembourg have also done little, but more because of lack of resources and personnel than because of any reluctance to engage in CCMS activities. Portugal, Greece, and Turkey have been positive toward

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the CCMS. Turkey has been the most active of the three in CCMS projects, and Portugal is undertaking to co-pilot a study on open waters pollution. Greece expressed a willingness to play a greater role but has refrained from doing so because of opposition from other NATO governments which dislike the Greek regime.

Some resistance to CCMS activities lingers, however. Perhaps the greatest hindrance has been the reluctance of officials traditionally concerned with matters now thought of as belonging to the field of urban problems and environmental pollution control to give their authority to any central committee or agency. These officials are spread throughout the governments and are becoming aware that growing public interest in these problems gives them increasing political leverage. As a result, the Western European governments have been slow to establish significant, central coordinating authorities. West Germany, which has developed significant domestic anti-pollution programs, has done perhaps the most in this regard. Italy and Canada have recently named inter-ministerial coordinating committees, but not much coordination has yet taken place. The UK has set up a special unit and appointed a Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution to make recommendations for coordination and study, but the effect on the UK's contribution to the CCMS has so far been slight.

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